



## News Release

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### **Utah's Melanoma Rates Fourth Highest in the Nation**

*UCAN Introduces the ABC'S of Sun Safety to Help Utahns  
Fight the Threat of Skin Cancer*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Cancer Action Network (UCAN) and the Utah Department of Health report that Utah's melanoma skin cancer rate is the fourth highest in the nation and more than 60 Utahns die each year from this disease. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, new skin cancer diagnoses are on the rise nationally. The annual melanoma rate in the United States is increasing by about 3 percent each year, which is faster than most other cancers.

“Living in a state with an average of 237 days of sunshine per year in combination with a high altitude puts Utahns at greater risk for skin cancer,” said Janet Heins, UCAN coordinator at the Utah Department of Health (UDOH). “That’s why the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and other members of UCAN are introducing the **ABC'S of Sun Safety** to remind parents about the important basic measures that can protect their families from skin cancer.” The simple **ABC'S of Sun Safety** are:

**A** - Avoid the sun in the middle of the day (from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.). Exposure from the sun's Ultra Violet (UV) rays can cause skin cancer even on cloudy days.

**B** - Block the sun by applying a generous amount of sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or higher. Also block the sun with long clothing, wide brimmed hats, UV protection sunglasses and umbrellas.

**C** - Continuously take sun safety precautions such as reapplying sunscreen throughout the day. Make sun safety a daily routine for your entire family, because one bad burn can mean skin cancer for your children later in life.

**S** - Speak to your family members about sun safety and set a good example for them. The more UV radiation your children receive in their first 18 years, the more likely they will develop skin cancer as an adult. All children, from tots to teens, should know the **ABC'S of Sun Safety**.

“There is substantial scientific information demonstrating that skin cancer is directly related to exposure to the sun's UV rays. This is a serious health risk to Utah families,” said Dr. Sancy Leachman, UCAN member and dermatologist at The Huntsman Cancer Institute.

(more)

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Leachman also stated, “In addition to reminding parents about the **ABC’s of Sun Safety**, UCAN is working to dispel some common misconceptions that people may have about sunburn and tanning.”

- “It is safe to tan if you do it slowly.” Wrong! When skin is exposed to sun its melanin increases, creating a tan. This indicates skin damage. The darker the tan, the higher the risk of skin cancer, no matter how gradual the tanning process.
- “Starting the summer off with a sunburn is a good way to begin the tanning process.” Wrong again. One bad burn early in life can mean skin cancer later.
- “If I put waterproof sunscreen on my child he/she can play all day in the pool and be safe.” That’s not quite right. Waterproof sunscreen may last up to an hour in the pool, but it should be applied every hour or so because many products rub off.
- “My children are sun safe if they wear T-shirts while they play in the pool.” Surprisingly, this isn’t completely true. The typical light-weight, white cotton T-shirt is not the best protection, and when wet, is less effective than using water-resistant sunscreen. Choose tightly woven fabrics that you can’t see through when held up to a light. Use in combination with sunscreen.
- “Using tanning beds is a safer way to tan.” Indoor tanning is not safer than outdoor sunlight. Popular among teen girls, tanning beds emit dangerous levels of UV rays. The American Academy of Dermatology and the World Health Organization recommend that no one under age 18 be allowed to use a tanning bed. A recent study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, reported tanning bed use was linked to a 2.5 times increased risk of squamous cell carcinoma and a 1.5 times increased risk for basal cell cancer.

“We hope that parents will make sun safety a habit for their family,” said Heins. “Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S. The American Cancer Society estimates about one million new cases of basal or squamous cell carcinoma and about 60,000 cases of malignant melanoma will be diagnosed this year in the U.S. Many of these skin cancers could have been prevented by protection from the sun’s rays. Skin cancer will claim the lives of approximately 9,800 Americans. That’s why we don’t take the sun lightly.”

This information and other important tips and links to skin cancer prevention Web sites are available at [www.ucan.cc](http://www.ucan.cc), or by calling 1-888-222-2542.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*